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SIR WILLIAM JONES,

THE LEARNED ORIENTAL SCHOLAR.

BY

HENRY MORRIS,

(MADRAS CIVIL SERVICE, *Retired*),

Author of "Anglo-Indian Worthies," "The History of the Godavery District," "A Simplified Telugu Grammar," and other works.

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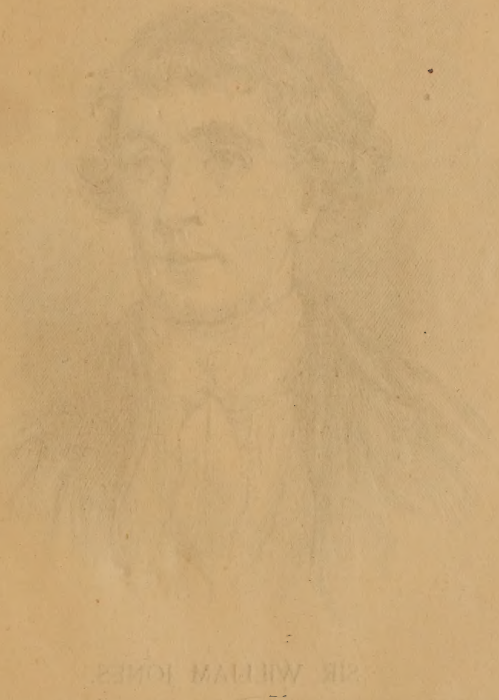

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FROM A.D. 1746 TO 1794.

"On parent knees, a naked, new-born child,
Weeping thou sat'st, while all around thee smiled;
So live, that sinking in thy last, long sleep,
Calm thou may'st smile, while all around thee weep."

Persian Distich, translated by himself.

SIR WILLIAM JONES was the scholar to whom India owes the solid foundation of Oriental learning and research. He led the advance in a pathway along which many European, Hindu, and Muhammadan scholars, several of whom have been more eminent even than himself, have followed; and for this India owes him a deep debt of gratitude which can never be fully repaid. For this reason no account of Anglo-Indian worthies would be complete without a narrative of his life and labours.

William Jones was born in London on September 28th, 1746. His father was a mathematician of some distinction, and was the intimate friend of Sir Isaac Newton and other eminent men. His mother was evidently a woman of clear intellect, sound judgment, and great resolution. As his father died when he was only three years old, and as he was her only son, an elder boy having died in infancy, she seems to have given her whole time to his early education, for which she was thoroughly qualified. She taught him so successfully that in his fourth year he was able to read distinctly any ordinary English book; and, as she thought it right to train his memory, he had learned to repeat some of the popular speeches in Shakespeare and the best of

Gay's Fables. As a general rule, it is not considered proper to exercise the tender brains of little children at an early age. Precocious children, as they are called, do not turn out well and fail in after-life from too early culture; but the little William proved an exception to this rule, and became a brilliant example of a youthful genius turning into a ripe scholar. This was due, perhaps, to his mother's judiciousness. She was most gentle and patient with him; but she refrained from answering his incessant questions about common things, always saying, "Read and you will know." This saying sank into his youthful mind, and he always acknowledged himself as indebted to the observance of it for his future attainments. At this time he had an accident which injured his right eye and nearly proved fatal to his sight. He struggled one day, when his frock was being put on, and one of the hooks stuck in his eye. The wound was healed in due time; but the eye-sight was weakened by it, and ever after remained imperfect.

At the close of his seventh year, the boy was sent to Harrow, a public school near London, at which many well-known English statesmen and other distinguished persons have been educated. Boys are now not usually placed at such large schools as Harrow until they are much older and stronger than he was. Latin and Greek, which are called in English classical languages, are chiefly taught at these schools; and, curious to say, the future linguist and scholar at first took a dislike to the rudiments of Latin. His mother judiciously abstained from pressing him until he knew more of his own language. In his ninth year, he had the misfortune to break one of his thigh-bones, which was the cause of his being kept from school for twelve months. This put him back in his studies; but when, in his twelfth year, he entered the higher division of the school, his very great abilities, combined with the most persevering diligence, soon made him the foremost scholar. Dr. Thackeray, who was the Headmaster for some time during his career at Harrow, and who was very chary in praising his pupils,

said of him that, if he were left naked and friendless on Salisbury plain (a large, uncultivated common near the city of Salisbury in the south of England), he would still find the road to riches and to fame. Dr. Sumner, who succeeded Dr. Thackeray on his retirement, soon contracted an ardent affection for his favourite pupil, and declared that he knew more Greek than himself, and was better acquainted with its idiom. Even at that early age, William Jones was voracious in his appetite for knowledge. Besides his ordinary school studies, he found time to learn the Arabic characters and to read the book of Psalms in Hebrew, while, during his holidays, he worked at French and Italian.

On leaving Harrow in 1764, young Jones went to the University of Oxford, where he resided at University College. His mother and sister went to live in the town of Oxford in order that they might be near him, and he spent with them as much of his time as he could spare from his severe and continuous studies. His mother had not been left in good circumstances when her husband died; and her son, therefore, was most anxious to do something to relieve her from expense on his account, for he dearly and tenderly loved her. He obtained his desire after he had been only a few months at the University; and on October 31, 1764, he became a scholar on what was called the foundation of Sir Simon Bennett, a gentleman who had left money for this purpose. About two years afterwards, on August 7, 1766, he was elected a fellow on the same foundation, which gave him about £100 a year —a sum that went further in the last century than it does in this. At first he did not enjoy his life at the University; but after a time, when he became accustomed to it and when he found that his abilities were appreciated, he became devotedly attached to Oxford, and was enthusiastic in its praises and ever ready in its defence. His college tutors, observing the amount of his knowledge, dispensed with his attendance at their lectures, for they admitted that he could employ his time to better advantage. The manner

in which he studied Greek was marvellous; but he also diligently read Arabic with a Syrian named Mirza, a native of Aleppo, whom he had found in London, and had induced to come and reside at Oxford. He likewise studied Persian.

While he was waiting for the Fellowship, which he afterwards obtained, and while feeling that he was a burden on the slender resources of his mother, he was offered the position of private tutor to Lord Althorp, the youthful son of Earl Spencer, an influential nobleman. He entered on his duties in the summer of 1765, and not only formed a great friendship with Lord and Lady Spencer but also with his pupil, to whom he wrote, long after the tie of tutor and pupil had been dissolved, "to your interests alone I am firmly attached, both from early habit and from mature reason, from ancient affection unchanged for a single moment, and from a full conviction that such affection was well placed." He found much to help him in his favourite pursuits in the numerous books that stocked Earl Spencer's well chosen library. At first he superintended Lord Althorp's education at home; and, when his pupil went to Harrow, he resided there to assist him in his work.

When the family was staying at Wimbledon, a few miles from London, in the spring of 1768, Mr. Jones received an application which led to his productions becoming first known to the public. The King of Denmark, who was on a visit to England, brought with him a manuscript in Persian giving the history of the great conqueror, Nadir Shah. He was anxious to have it translated, and he applied to one of the Secretaries of State asking him to recommend a suitable translator. The Secretary sent it to Mr. Jones with the request that he would make a literal translation of it into French. It was a difficult task and took him a year to complete, for his French had to be submitted to a native of France for the correction of idioms which no one but a Frenchman could correct. This work was published in 1770, and was the foundation

of his literary fame. The King of Denmark, as an expression of his gratitude, sent him a diploma making him a member of the Royal Society of Copenhagen, and recommended him strongly to his own sovereign. Mr. Jones, it may here be stated, took the degree of B. A. at Oxford in 1768 and that of M. A. in 1773, and was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society of England on April 30, 1772.

In the year 1770, Mr. Jones, two years after Lord Althorp had entered Harrow, thought it advisable to give up his position as tutor, and definitely to adopt the profession of the law. He entered the Temple, which is one of the places where young men are trained for the legal profession, in September of that year, and was called to the bar in January, 1774. When he had applied himself to the study of law earlier he took rather a dislike to it; but now that he had determined to adopt it as his life's work, he threw himself into it with all the energy and ardour of his nature. "I have just begun," he wrote to a friend at this time, "to contemplate the stately edifice of the laws of England,

'The gather'd wisdom of a thousand years,'

if you will allow me to parody a line of Pope. I do not see why the study of the law is called dry and unpleasant; and I very much suspect that it seems to those only who would think any study unpleasant, which required a great application of mind and exertion of the memory." To show his devotion to his new profession he made a sacrifice, a year after he was called to the bar, which plainly showed how sincere his resolution was. He gave up his beloved oriental studies in order that he might give himself unreservedly to the practice and the learning of law. His researches were not confined only to one branch of law, but he included the whole in its fullest extent. He compared ancient legislation with modern, and he actually collated the codes of the various nations of Europe so as to compare them with each other. "If the reader recollects," is the remark of his biographer,

Lord Teignmouth, "the enthusiasm of Mr. Jones in the prosecution of his oriental studies, the extent and depth of his attainments in the literature of Asia, and the high reputation which he had acquired from them, he will readily applaud his resolution and perseverance in renouncing his favourite pursuits. That he acted wisely, will be admitted, but the sacrifice of inclination to duty, affords an example of too great use and importance to pass without particular observation."

The year 1780 was an eventful one in Mr. Jones's life. In it his mother, to whom he was tenderly attached, died. He owed very much to her. She gave him the first instruction and encouragement in learning; she helped in forming his habits and his tastes; and she enabled him to purchase books and to obtain tuition out of her slender income. He ceased, as already stated, to take anything from her directly he obtained a Fellowship; and, as his own income increased, he had the satisfaction of helping her. She was his dearest friend, and the one to whom he confided his most cherished plans and hopes. He sincerely and heartily mourned her. "She was ever," he wrote to a friend, "in my opinion the best of women; I trust she is now the happiest. But my affliction for her is inconsolable."

In this year Mr. Jones was induced by the encouragement of his friends to come forward as a candidate to represent in Parliament his beloved University of Oxford, which place was about soon to be vacated. Great exertions were made on his behalf. He was himself very anxious to succeed, because he was strongly of opinion that every man was bound to exert himself to the utmost of his ability for the benefit of his country, and he considered that there could not be a better sphere for this than in the venerable senate of the kingdom. He affirmed that his great object of imitation was Selden, and that, if he could obtain the same honour which was conferred on him, he would, like him, devote the rest of his life to the service of his constituents and country, to the practice of his

useful profession, and to the unreserved study of English law, history, and literature. He was already hankering after the appointment of a judgeship in India; but he stated that his highest ambition was to serve his country in Parliament, and that he would have cheerfully sacrificed to it, "not only," as he expressed it "an Indian Judgeship of six thousand a year, but a Nabobship with as many millions." After the contest had gone on for some time, however, Mr. Jones discovered that he had no chance of success and, therefore, he withdrew from it, not wishing to give his friends the trouble of voting for one who was not likely to be returned. A Latin Ode to liberty which he wrote about this time, and in which occurred some lines of rather strong praise of freedom, was probably the cause of his failure.

After this disappointment Mr. Jones renewed with redoubled attention his legal studies. He was anxious to be known as an author in this department as well as in that of lighter literature; and he wrote an Essay on Bailments, which received the approval of such a high authority as Lord Mansfield. He was also as diligent in the courts of law, being the active part of his profession, as he was in the more studious portion of it, for he wrote to his future father-in-law that he had spoken the day before in Westminter Hall for two hours and a half on a knotty point of law, and for an hour, on the day he was writing, about another interesting question. During the winter of 1780, Mr. Jones, after an interval of six years, resumed his study of Arabic poetry. His work at that time was the translation of seven ancient poems, which were considered the finest that had been written in Arabia before the days of Muhammad. This translation was published in 1783.

It has already been stated that Mr. Jones was anxious to obtain an appointment as a judge in India. In March, 1783, he gained the accomplishment of his desire. He was appointed one of the Puisne Judges of the Supreme Court of Judicature at Fort William in Bengal,

and at the same time he had the honour of knighthood conferred upon him. This appointment relieved him from all anxiety as to his income, which had hitherto been very precarious, and he was made quite independent. This being the case, he found himself placed in a position to marry. He had become acquainted, during his residence with Lord and Lady Spencer at Wimbledon, with Miss Shipley, the eldest daughter of Dr. Shipley, afterwards Bishop of St. Asaph, in Wales, and had since continued much attached to her. He had been determined never to be dependent on any one, and therefore delayed asking her to become his wife; but being now in an independent position, he turned to her at once, and he had the happiness of being united to her in April, 1783.

Sir William and Lady Jones left England in H. M. S. *Crocodile* in April 1783, and reached Calcutta after a very long voyage in September. Such a voyage was to most persons very tedious and disagreeable; but Sir William was so indefatigable in study, and so eager to fulfil the duties of the position he was going to occupy in the best way possible, that he had abundance to do on the way, which prevented all lassitude and fatigue. He was welcomed heartily to Calcutta, for his fame had preceded him; and, on his side, he was pleased to leave behind him political cares and dissensions, and looked forward with pleasure to the independence of his position and to the prospect of doing good. But what was most delightful to him was the opportunity afforded him of exploring the fields of Persian and Hindu literature. He had now reached the land to which he had been looking forward for many years. He was among a people whose history, ancient language, and customs he was anxious to study on the spot. After four years' residence in the country, he wrote: "I never was unhappy in England; it was not in my nature to be so; but I never was happy till I was settled in India."

Sir William Jones entered on his judicial duties in December, 1783; and, at the opening of the sessions

delivered his first charge to the grand jury. Not very long before there had been a serious conflict between the Supreme Court and the Government. He alluded to this in a mild and conciliatory manner, and showed that it might have been avoided, and that, as the duties of each were distinct, they ought each to pursue its own course with the one object before them of the public good. This address was received with general satisfaction.

Very soon after his arrival, Sir William turned his attention to his favourite pursuits, and he proposed the foundation of a Society for the purpose of prosecuting the study of the history, the religions, the archæology, and the literature of Asia. This suggestion was received with much favour by those to whom he proposed it, and the new Society was started at a meeting held in January, 1784. It was called the Bengal Asiatic Society, and was the parent of many other similar institutions, especially the Royal Asiatic Society of London. It has been the means of doing a very great deal of good in stimulating the study of Oriental learning. It was resolved at the first meeting of the members to ask Mr. Warren Hastings, the Governor-General, who had done much to foster and encourage Persian and Sanskrit Literature, to be the first President of the Society. He at once declined the honour, and suggested that Sir William Jones, who had himself proposed the formation of the Society, should be requested to accept the position of its President. "He begged leave," he courteously said in declining, "to resign his pretensions to the gentleman whose genius had planned the institution, and was most capable of conducting it to the attainment of the great and splendid purposes of its formation." Sir William Jones was then unanimously elected President. He afterwards gave an address at each annual meeting of the Society during his life-time, and his genius gave it a magnificent start. Three volumes of the *Asiatic Researches*, as the records of the Society were called, were published during the time he was President. One of these volumes was sent to the President of the Board of Control

for presentation to King George the Third, who expressed "his satisfaction in the progress of the sciences in the British establishment in India, and his approbation of the important undertaking in which Sir William Jones is engaged."

At the first meeting after this Society had been founded, he delivered an address in which he not only gave a description of the object for which it had been instituted, but promised to communicate from time to time the results of his own studies and researches. For this purpose, and to enable him to fulfil more satisfactorily his duties as a judge, he vigorously plunged into the study of Sanskrit. His first object in this study was to qualify himself to examine the authorities quoted by the professors of Hindu law, so that he might take nothing second-hand. He was also anxious to acquire a thorough knowledge of Sanskrit in order to explore the religion and the history of the Hindus by consulting the original documents and records in which they are contained. He threw himself so heartily into this congenial study that he soon attained the object of his ambition, which, as he expressed it, was "to be a match in conversation with the learned natives whom I may happen to meet." Six years afterwards he was able to write: "I jabber Sanskrit every day with the pundits, and hope, before I leave India, to understand it as well as I do Latin." Writing a year later to Warren Hastings, he tells him: "My principal amusement is botany, and the conversation of the pundits, with whom I talk fluently in the language of the gods." The chief literary fruits of his Sanskrit labours were the translation of Kalidasa's celebrated drama *Sakuntala*, which was published in 1789, and the translation of the *Laws of Manu*, which appeared only a short time before his death.

Sir William Jones was very anxious to visit the city of Benares and other places in the interior, so that he might see the country, and gain some insight into the daily life of the Hindus. Accordingly he took advantage of the recess of the Supreme Court from July to October 1784, to

undertake a tour as far as Benares. He had been ailing for some time before leaving Calcutta, and at several places on the way he became very ill, and this much hindered his progress. His friend and biographer, Mr. Shore, afterwards Lord Teignmouth, found him very ill near Murshidabad. At Bhagalpur he remained some weeks, and seems quite to have recovered his health, so that he was able to continue his journey to Benares. He was pleased with all he saw and heard, the scenes being so new and strange to him, although he had often read about them and imagined them. The latter part of his tour seems quite to have reinstated his health, so that he was for some years able to bear the weakening climate of Lower Bengal.

He did not always live in Calcutta, however, although he was obliged to attend the sittings of the Court. He had a house on the banks of the Ganges, five miles from the Court, and it was his custom to go out thither after sunset when he had finished his day's work, and to return early in the morning, generally walking the distance. During the recesses of the Court he retired to Krishnagar, where he bought a small house, and where he enjoyed the leisure and utilized the time in his favourite studies and pursuits. There were many learned Brahmins at Nadiya, with whom he delighted to converse, and from whom he obtained much information regarding Hindu literature and religion. He liked the dry soil and pure air of Krishnagar, and regretted when he had to leave his pleasant cottage there, as he called it, for the more trying work of the Court. The only time when he took a longer excursion was in February 1786, when he went by sea to Chittagong.

Sir William Jones afterwards enjoyed very tolerable health, notwithstanding his constant application to work, both literary and judicial. He was very much troubled, however, by the delicate health of Lady Jones, with whom the climate of India did not agree at all. In fact, he was so apprehensive of the consequences that he continually intended to urge her return to England for the sake of her

health. She was able, in spite of her frequent illnesses, to remain with him ten years. The tenour of his life flowed on very evenly; and, if he had not been so anxious about his wife's health, he would have been perfectly happy. "If the whole legislature of Britain," he wrote to a friend, who had evidently wanted to obtain preferment for him, "were to offer me a different station from that which I now fill, I should most gratefully and respectfully decline it. The character of an ambitious judge is, in my opinion, very dangerous to public justice; and if I were a sole legislator, it should be enacted that every judge should remain for life in the place which he first accepted. This is not the language of a cynic, but of a man who loves his friends, his country, and mankind, who knows the short duration of human life, and who has learned to be contented." He then gives an account of his private life during the sitting of the Court. Seven hours a day were on an average occupied by his judicial duties, one hour was given to his literary work, and one hour in the evening he read aloud to Lady Jones. Busy as he was during the time of his judicial work, he always looked forward to the vacation, when he could retire to his beloved cottage at Krishnagar, where he heard nothing, it is true, of plaintiffs and defendants, but where he had harder work and was more busily employed even than in the great and busy city.

Sir William Jones did not labour at oriental languages simply for the love of them, though he certainly did that; but he was anxious to turn what he knew to practical use, and he wished to be of service not only to his own country but to the country of his adoption. The form in which this could best be done early suggested itself to his genius. He saw how necessary it was that there should be some authoritative code which should state clearly and concisely, both in Sanskrit and Arabic, and in English, the principles that underlie the Hindu and Muhammadan laws in cases of contract and inheritance. It was considered right that all such cases

should be decided according to the respective persuasions of the parties; but the English judges were dependent on the interpretation of the law as laid down by the Hindu pundits or the Muhammadan maulavies. He proposed that a digest of Hindu and Muhammadan law should be prepared, and, as he could not name any other person competent to superintend the work, he offered his own services to Government to do it himself. We think, however, that the proposal regarding this important work, which took up the greater part of his leisure time, and which was really the earthly cause of his death, as he remained in India after Lady Jones had left in order to complete it, ought to be given in his own words. His letter addressed to Lord Cornwallis, then Governor-General of India, is as follows: "It has long been my wish to address the Government of the British dominions in India on the administration of justice among the natives of Bengal and Behar, a subject of equal importance to the appellate jurisdiction of the Supreme Court at Calcutta, where the judges are required by the legislature to decide controversies between Hindu and Muhammadan parties according to their respective laws of contracts and of succession to property. Nothing indeed could be more obviously just than to determine private contests according to those laws, which the parties themselves had ever considered as the rules of their conduct and engagements in civil life; nor could anything be wiser than, by a legislative act, to assure the Hindu and Mussulman subjects of Great Britain that the private law which they severally held sacred, and a violation of which they would have thought the most grievous oppression, should not be superseded by a new system of which they could have no knowledge, and which they must have considered as imposed on them by a spirit of rigour and intolerance."

"So far the principle of decision between native parties in a cause appears perfectly clear; but the difficulty lies in the application of the principle to practice; for the Hindu

and Mussulman laws are locked up for the most part in two very difficult languages, Sanskrit and Arabic, and, if we give judgment, only from the opinions of the native lawyers and scholars, we can never be sure that we have not been deceived by them."

"The obvious remedy for this evil had occurred to me before I left England. If we had a complete Digest of Hindu and Muhammadan laws, compiled by the most learned of the native lawyers, with an accurate verbal translation into English, we should rarely be at a loss for principles, and rules of law applicable to the cases before us."

"The great difficulty is to find a director of the work and a translator of it, who with a competent knowledge of Sanskrit and Arabic, has a general acquaintance with the principles of jurisprudence, and a sufficient share even of legislative spirit, to arrange the plan of a Digest, superintend the compilation of it, and render the whole into perspicuous English. Now, though I am truly conscious of possessing a very moderate portion of those talents, which I should require in the superintendent of such a work, yet I may without vanity profess myself equal to the labour of it; and though I would much rather see the work well conducted by any man than myself, yet I would rather give myself the trouble of it than not live to see it conducted at all; and I cannot but know that the qualifications required even in the low degree in which I possess them, are not often found united in the same person. If your Lordship, therefore, shall be of opinion that a Digest of Hindu and Muhammadan laws would be a work of national honour and utility, I so cherish both, that I offer the nation my humble labour as far as I can dispose of my time consistently with the faithful discharge of my duty as a Magistrate." The letter from which the more important passages have been given above, was dated March 19, 1788. The Governor-General saw at once how necessary the work thus sketched out was, and how likely it would be to reflect the highest honour on his adminis-

tration; and he gratefully accepted Sir William Jones's disinterested offer, expressing his great satisfaction that a person so eminently qualified for the task should freely render his services from a spirit of pure patriotism and benevolence. Sir William threw his whole heart into this congenial work; but it was a great strain on his strength. His eyes had always been weak, and he did not spare them sufficiently. "I am so intent," he wrote, "upon seeing the Digest of Indian laws completed that I devote my leisure almost entirely to that object; the natives are much pleased with the work; but it is only a preliminary to the security which I hope to see established among our Asiatic subjects." He was engaged on this arduous occupation up to the very end of his life; but it was by no means completed then, and Mr. Colebrooke, the distinguished Sanskrit scholar, took up the unfinished work as it fell from his hands, and published the Digest on the Hindu law.

Notwithstanding this severe application to a very abstruse subject, Sir William Jones sometimes found time to write to friends. One extract must here be given from a letter written on October 20th, 1791, to Mr. Warren Hastings, because it shows the estimate that such a virtuous man had formed of Hastings' character which had been so often traduced. "Before you can receive this," he wrote, "you will, I doubt not, have obtained a complete triumph over your persecutors; and your character will have risen, not brighter indeed, but more conspicuously bright, from the furnace of their persecution." He was looking forward, however, to returning to his native land some day, when, according to the ideal, which he frequently pictured, he might enjoy what he considered the happiest period of a man's life, when he could have literary leisure and be free from official work. He had for years conceived the project of a long heroic poem in blank verse on the discovery of Britain, in which he could introduce his high ideas on the government and the state. Writing to the eminent botanist Sir Joseph Banks, he said: "The

last twenty years of my life I shall spend, I trust, in a studious retreat; and if you know of a pleasant country-house to be disposed of in your part of Middlesex, with pasture-ground for my cattle, and garden-ground enough for my amusement, have the goodness to inform me of it." "I have not enough," he wrote to another friend, "to establish that absolute independence which has been the chief end and aim of my life; and I must stay in this country a few years longer." This object and the preparation of the Digest kept him in India; but He who has the sovereign power over life and death, had other purposes for him.

In March, 1793, Sir William's great friend, Sir John Shore, returned to Calcutta with a commission to succeed Lord Cornwallis as Governor-General on his retirement. He was gratified at welcoming this friend again. The health of Lady Jones had, for some time past, been very precarious, and the doctors had often urged her return to England, as the only means of prolonging her life. Her affection to her husband had hitherto prevented her from following this advice; but now she agreed to comply with it, and embarked for England in December, 1793. He fully intended to follow her the next season, when he thought his engagement with the Government on the Digest would be ended. In his last letter to Sir John Shore he wrote: "I will follow her as soon as I can, for although I shall have more than enough to supply all the wants of a man who would rather have been Cincinnatus with his plough than Lucullus with all his wealth (being a reference to old Roman History), yet I wish to complete the system of Indian laws while I remain in India, because I wish to perform whatever I promise with the least possible imperfection; and in so difficult a work doubts must arise, which the pundits alone can remove." We give another extract from the letter in which the above passage occurs, because it is the latest expression of his affection for his friend and biographer, and because the sentiment expressed is in harmony with succeeding events. Sir

John Shore had recently heard of the deaths of two of his children in England, and in endeavouring to offer him true consolation in his sorrow, Sir William Jones said: "I felt more for you than I should for most men on so melancholy an occasion, because I well know the sensibility of your heart. The only topic of consolation happily presented itself to you: reason perhaps might convince us that the death of a created being never happens without the will of the Creator, who governs this world by a special interposition of His providential care; but, as this is a truth which Revelation expressly teaches us, our only true comfort in affliction must be derived from Christian philosophy, which, so far from encouraging us to stifle our natural feelings, that even the divine Author of it wept on the death of a friend. This doctrine, though superfluous to you, is always present to my mind."

The absence of his wife took the heart out of all Sir William Jones's pursuits during the few months that elapsed after it. She had helped to sweeten his hours of toil, and to cheer his times of relaxation. Although he went out a little more into general European society, he was unhappy and often dejected. Either on the evening of April 20, 1794, or about that date, he called on Sir John Shore, after having been out walking longer than usual, and complained of aguish symptoms. He mentioned that he was going to take some medicine, and laughingly repeated an old proverb, "An ague in the spring is medicine for a king." He was unaware, however, that the real nature of his complaint was the more serious disease, inflammation of the liver. This was discovered when the doctor was called in, but too late. Unhappily his servants did not inform Sir John Shore how seriously ill he was; but, on the morning of Sunday, April 27, alarmed at the idea of his approaching death, they hurriedly ran to his house to let him know their fears. Sir John went to him at once. "He was lying," to use the exact words of his biographer, "on his bed in a posture of meditation; and the only

symptom of remaining life was a small degree of motion in the heart, which after a few seconds ceased, and he expired without a pang or groan. His bodily suffering, from the complacency of his features and the ease of his attitude, could not have been severe; and his mind must have derived consolation from those sources where he had been in the habit of seeking it, and where, alone, in our last moments, it can ever be found." Sir John Shore never ceased to regret the fact that his friend's attendants had not told him of his serious illness, and thus prevented him from having the sad pleasure of soothing the last moments of one to whom he was so deeply attached. Thus fell asleep, at the early age of forty-seven, the first oriental scholar of his day and one of the best of men.

There is no doubt about the genius of Sir William Jones. It was chiefly displayed in the acquisition of languages; but he was equally eminent in the learning of law, and in lighter studies than these. It was a favourite idea of his that all men have an equal capacity for improvement, and that those who fail to attain superior learning or eminence, do so on account of their not having sufficiently exerted themselves. After a conversation on this subject in which Sir William had maintained this view, a friend sent him the following lines, to which he replied *impromptu* in verses that show his modesty as well as his genius:

"Sir William, you attempt in vain
By depth of reason to maintain,
That all men's talents are the same,
And they, not Nature, are to blame.
Whate'er you say, whate'er you write,
Proves your opponents in the right.
Lest genius should be ill-defined,
I term it your superior mind,
Hence to your friends 'tis plainly shewn,
You're ignorant of yourself alone."

SIR WILLIAM JONES'S ANSWER.

"Ah! but too well, dear friend, I know
My fancy weak, my reason slow,
My memory by art improved,
My mind by baseless trifles moved.
Give me (thus high my pride I raise)
The Ploughman's or the Gardener's praise,
With patient and unceasing toil,
To meliorate a stubborn soil.
And say, (no higher meed I ask)
With zeal hast thou performed thy task,
Praise, of which virtuous minds may boast,
They best confer, who merit most."

Notwithstanding this, Sir William, in addition to intellect of a high order, possessed a marvellous capacity for diligence. He was industrious to an eminent degree. From his earliest years he was well-known for his great perseverance. Even as a school-boy, he employed, as we have seen, his leisure time during his holidays in prosecuting studies for which boys of his age seldom cared, and thus he became acquainted with the literature of other European countries besides his own. The reason for his being able to get through so much, was the careful manner in which he managed his time. A card written in his own hand, describing the work which he desired to get through during one of the vacations of his Court, is given here as a specimen of his carefully planned studies.

DAILY STUDIES FOR THE LONG VACATION OF 1785.

Morning.—One letter. Ten Chapters of the Bible. Sanskrit Grammar. Hindu Law, &c.
Afternoon.—Indian Geography.
Evening.—Roman History. Chess. Ariosto.

On a scrap found among his papers the following well-known lines of Sir Edward Coke, one of the great authorities on English law, were transcribed.

SIR EDWARD COKE.

"Six hours in sleep, in law's grave study six,
Four spend in prayer,—the rest on nature fix."

He wrote under these lines what he considered an improved version of them.

RATHER.

"Seven hours to law, to soothing slumber seven,
Ten to the world allot, and *all* to Heaven."

It was by the careful arrangement of time, he was able to get through so much.

Sir William Jones was a high-minded and fearless judge. He himself, in his first charge, informed the grand jury at Calcutta that he aspired to no popularity, and sought no praise but that which might be given to a strict and conscientious discharge of duty, without predilection or prejudice of any kind, and with a fixed resolution to pronounce on all occasions what he conceived to be the law, than which no individual must suppose himself wiser. "The inflexible integrity with which he discharged the solemn duty of this station," wrote his biographer, "will long be remembered in Calcutta, both by Europeans and Natives." One way in which he kept himself free from parties and preserved his impartiality, was that he always refrained from asking favours and appointments for private friends.

His great power as a linguist helped him considerably in his judicial duties, more particularly when he had to deal with the principles of Hindu or Muhammadan law. Considering the great strain which the study and the practice of law, whether as a barrister or as a judge, entails on the constitution and the intellect of any lawyer, we wonder all the more when we consider the extensive acquirements of Sir William Jones in various branches of literature and science; but he was pre-eminently a linguist. The following list, stating the number of languages which

he knew, was found after his death on a paper in his handwriting :

LANGUAGES.

Eight languages studied critically: English, Latin, French, Italian, Greek, Arabic, Persian, Sanscrit. Eight studied less perfectly but all intelligible with a dictionary: Spanish, Portuguese, German, Runick, Hebrew, Bengali, Hindi, Turkish. Twelve studied less perfectly, but all attainable: Tibetian, Pali, Pahlavi, Deri, Russian, Syriac, Ethiopic, Coptic.

Though he devoted himself heartily and persistently to the study of Sanskrit after his arrival in India, he was no less diligent in his Persian and Arabic studies. We read that, during his short holiday at Chittagong, he found time, in addition to his other occupations, to read through twice the poem of Firdausi, which was supposed to contain some sixty thousand couplets.

Sir William Jones kept in his employ a large staff of pundits and writers, the expense of which was very considerable. It is said that he paid his Sanskrit Munshi Rs. 500 a month; and when he made known to the Government his proposal regarding a Digest of Hindu and Muhammadan Law, he stated that he would himself cheerfully have borne the whole expense of it, which he knew would be great, if his establishment of readers and writers, which he could not then discontinue without inconvenience, did not require more than half of the monthly expense that the compilation of such a digest would demand.

His intercourse with both Hindus and Muhamadans was very extensive. His manner towards them was most kind and courteous, and he counted many of those with whom he was more intimately connected as his friends. "The pundits who were in the habit of attending him," Sir John Shore remarked, "when I saw them at a public *durbar*, a few days after his death, could

neither restrain their tears for his loss, nor find terms to express their admiration at the wonderful progress which he had made in the sciences which they professed."

Sir William was peculiarly tender-hearted even to the animal creation. He was very fond of botany, a study which he could freely prosecute without giving pain; but he shrank from other parts of natural history, because of the cruelty to living creatures which it entailed. "I never could learn by what right," to use his own words on the subject, "nor conceive with what feelings, a naturalist can occasion the misery of an innocent bird, and leave its young, perhaps, to perish in a cold nest, because it has gay plumage, and has never been accurately delineated, or deprive even a butterfly of its natural enjoyments, because it has the misfortune to be rare or beautiful: nor shall I ever forget the couplet of Firdausi:

> "Ah! spare yon emmet, rich in hoarded grain;
> He lives with pleasure, and he dies with pain."

The good and great man whose life we are considering was pre-eminently a Christian. When he was in the twenty-fourth year of his age, some doubts regarding the proof of the truth of the religion in which he had been brought up seem to have troubled his mind; and feeling the necessity of examining it just as carefully as if he had not been trained in the Christian faith, he made the resolve to read the whole of the Holy Scriptures in the original languages in which they were written, that he might be enabled to form a correct judgment of the connection between the two parts, and of the evidence regarding them, both internal and external. This study confirmed him in the belief of their truth, and he appears never afterwards to have wavered in his attachment to the religion of Christ.

He was always a diligent student of the Bible. The following statement in his hand-writing was found in his own copy of the sacred volume:—"I have carefully and regularly perused these Holy Scriptures, and am of opinion that the volume, independently of its divine origin, con-

tains more sublimity, purer morality, more important history, and finer strains of eloquence, than can be collected from all other books, in whatever language they may have been written." He repeated these sentiments in one of his public addresses on Asiatic literature, and he added to his statement these words: "The two parts of which the Scriptures consist, are connected by a chain of compositions, which bear no resemblance in form or style to any that can be produced from the stores of Grecian, Indian, Persian, or even Arabian learning; the antiquity of those compositions no man doubts; and the unstrained application of them to events long subsequent to their publication, is a solid ground of belief that they were genuine compositions, and consequently inspired." The fulfilment of the prophecies contained in the Bible particularly struck him, and fixed itself indelibly on the historical faculty which was so prominent in his mind.

The heart of Sir William Jones would doubtless have rejoiced at the translation of the Scriptures into so many languages of India as they are now. Among the many objects of inquiry during his residence in Asia, which he wrote down during his outward voyage, two were, to print and publish the Gospel of St. Luke in Arabic and the Psalms of David in Persian verse. In a dissertation published in 1786 he wrote, as a vindication of his sincere desire to ascertain clearly the truth and nothing but the truth: "I, who cannot help believing the divinity of the Messiah, from the undisputed antiquity and manifest completion of many prophecies, especially those of Isaiah, in the only person recorded by history to whom they are applicable, am obliged, of course, to believe the sanctity of the venerable books to which that sacred person refers as genuine; but it is not the truth of our national religion as such, that I have at heart. It is TRUTH itself." Entertaining such ideas as these, Sir William Jones mentions several sad obstacles to the extension of "our pure faith" in India. "The only human mode perhaps of causing so great a revolution," he emphatically said, "is to translate

into Sanskrit and Persian, such chapters of the prophets, and particularly Isaiah, as are indisputably evangelical, together with one of the Gospels, and a plain prefatory discourse containing full evidence of the very distant ages, in which the predictions themselves and the history of the divine person predicted were severally made public, and then quietly to disperse the work among the well-educated natives, with whom, if in due time it failed of promoting very salutary fruit by its natural influence, we could only lament more than ever the strength of prejudice and weakness of unassisted reason." Just a few months before Sir William Jones died, a young and friendless missionary * arrived in Calcutta; and ere long, did more than any one before him to give the Gospel in their own living tongues to the Hindus of Bengal, and to help forward other translations of the sacred volume.

Having this faith in the truth of the Scriptures, it is needless to say that Sir William Jones was a thoroughly devout man. His sincere desire was to be perfectly submissive to the will of God in all things, and to be guided and directed by Him in every event of life. When he was lying ill during his journey in 1784, and he was reduced to a state of great weakness, he composed a brief prayer, which his biographer rescued from oblivion, and we insert it here because it is an indication of the genuine feelings of his mind at the solemn season when death seemed to be drawing near, and because it is the composition of a man who was not by profession a minister in the Church of Christ. "O Thou Bestower of all good," he wrote, "if it please thee to continue my easy tasks in this life, grant me strength to perform them as a faithful servant; but if thy wisdom hath willed to end them by this thy visitation, admit me, not weighing my unworthiness, but through thy mercy declared in Christ, into thy heavenly mansions, that I may continually advance in happiness, by advancing in true knowledge and awful love of thee. Thy will be done."

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* Dr. William Carey.

This was the key-note to his whole life. His legal studies, his judicial work, his marvellous acquaintance with oriental literature, were all undertaken with a sincere desire for the good of mankind and under the direction of a powerful mind and strong will rendered submissive to the divine will and thoroughly imbued with Christian faith, hope, and love. The India of the present day owes a debt of gratitude to the pure life and the unwearied researches of Sir William Jones.

Sir William Jones's Life.

The following touching letter was written by Lady Jones to Mr. Charles Grant, who had been a great friend of her husband's, and it is here quoted as throwing a side light upon Sir William's Christian character. It is dated January 29, 1795 :

"I have just got a set of Barrow's sermons which my dear Sir William was very fond of. My brother read me one last night on submission to the Divine will (which I remembered my beloved friend selected to read to me when I received the afflicting news of my father's death). I was greatly affected : but I think it has more strongly impressed my mind with the duty of submission ; but surely, if I did truly and sincerely submit, I should not so often be so dejected as I am. You, who know how we lived, will allow I have cause to grieve ; but have I not also cause to be thankful for having so lived with such a friend, as few can glory in like happiness, or consequently lament the like loss ? But I must not intrude on your valuable time by indulging myself any longer on the only subject my heart is filled with."

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